

Section: Division of Nursing
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PROCEDURE

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HACKETTSTOWN COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

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MATERNAL SERVICES
(Scope)

TITLE: WHIRLPOOL HYDROTHERAPY DURING LABOR

PURPOSE: To outline procedure for use of hydrotherapy to increase total body relaxation and provide pain relief during labor.

- EQUIPMENT LIST:**
1. Water thermometer
 2. Underwater fetal doppler or telemetry unit
 3. Patient gown and robe
 4. Towels
 5. Bath blanket

- | CONTENT: | PROCEDURE STEPS: | KEY POINTS: |
|-----------------|--|--|
| | 1. Obtain order for whirlpool usage from medical provider. | Uterine contractions may be slowed or stopped completely when use of tub or whirlpool occurs before active labor is established. |
| | 2. Obtain a 20-minute reassuring baseline fetal heart rate and uterine contraction prior to whirlpool usage, per Fetal Heart Monitoring protocol. | To assess maternal and fetal well being. |
| | 3. Maintain water temperature between 95°F – 100°F, or 36.6-37.8°C for the laboring woman. Do hourly temperature on patient and check water temperature hourly. | To prevent hypothermia/hyperthermia of the patient and document in labor annotations. |
| | 4. Encourage patient to empty bladder prior to entering tub. | |
| | 5. Use intermittent fetal heart rate monitoring via hand held doppler or telemetry unit and document per protocol. Assess and record maternal vital signs and uterine contractions per protocol. | To assess maternal and fetal well being throughout hydrotherapy. |
| | 6. Encourage and provide hydration while in tub. | Prevent dehydration. |
| | 7. Assist the patient out of the tub following hydrotherapy. Encourage patient to empty bladder. | |

Important Points to Remember:

1. Maternal temperature may rise after the bath and the fetal heart tones will rise accordingly. Hydrotherapy may also produce weakness, dizziness, nausea, or maternal hypotension.
2. Jets on the whirlpool may or may not be used per

patient request. When using jets, direct the water at the back, abdomen or legs (avoid the vagina.)

3. In the event of an inadvertent delivery in the whirlpool tub, assist with the delivery. Follow **Underwater Birth** Procedure/Protocol.
4. Mothers may use the whirlpool tub with ruptured membranes and/or bloody show.
5. Mothers may use the whirlpool tub while Cervidil is in place.
6. **Contraindications:**
 - a. Preterm labor
 - b. Non-reassuring fetal heart tones
 - c. Thick meconium fluid
 - e. Abnormal vaginal bleeding
 - e. Epidural catheter
 - f. Skin lesions
 - g. Abnormal maternal vital signs
7. Labor support person/persons are encouraged to visit with the mother during hydrotherapy. To encourage relaxation and provide support.
8. Hydrotherapy is most appropriately initiated in active labor for relaxation and pain management (4-5 cm dilation.) In prelabor or latent phase, it is likely that immersion will slow contractions or stop them temporarily because plasma volume expands when one is immersed in water.

REFERENCES: Protocols for High-Risk Pregnancies, edited by John T. Qweenan, M.D., and John C. Hobbins, M.D., Medical Economics Company, Inc., 1987, pp 15-17.
Simpson, Kathleen and Creehan, Patricia (2001). AWHONN Perinatal Nursing. Philadelphia, Lippincott.